

## **FAMILY-CENTERED OUT-OF-HOME CARE**

Family-Centered Out-of-Home Care is designed as a strengths-based family-centered approach to providing services when children are removed from their homes. Services build upon family strengths and community support to expedite permanency for these children, either through timelier reunification with their parent(s) or other permanency plans, including kinship care, guardianship, and adoption. The division completed statewide implementation of this practice by the end of SFY-99.

The program goals are to achieve safety, well being, and permanence for children in a timely manner; and by doing so, reduce the number of placements and length of time children remain in care. The practice is also designed to reduce the number of children who re-enter care and increase consumer satisfaction with the out-of-home care process. Progress toward the above goals is as follows:

- Length of stay in out of home care has decreased in each of the last. The average length of stay for the children in care during the SFY 00– SFY-04 is as follows: 2000 – 25.2 months, 2001-20.3, 2002 - 24.6 months, 2003 – 24.4 months and 2004 -24.1.
- The number of children who re-entered foster care during the last five years has In SFY-00, 1632 children re-entered care out of a total of 7346 entries, equaling 22.2% of the population. In SFY-01, 1617 children re-entered care out of 7425 entries, equaling 21.77% of the population. In SFY-02, 1685 children re-entered care out of a total of 7568 entries, equaling 22.26% of the population. Re-entries in SFY-03 were 1509 children of a total 6739, equaling 22% of the population of children entering care. In SFY -04 1,531 children re-entered care out of 6893 entries equaling 22.3% of the population of children entering care.
- The average number of moves per child has increased each year since 1999. The average move per child was 3.08 in SFY-99, 3.08 in SFY-00, 3.14 in SFY-01, 3.24 in SFY-02, 3.32 in SFY-03 and 3.39 in SFY-04.

The Division believes that each child has the right to enduring adult relationships which promote safety, security, and a sense of identity, within his/her own family, whenever possible. The Division's foremost obligation is to provide families with services and supports necessary to ensure the child's safety, preserve and strengthen families, and to prevent, whenever possible, out-of-home placements. When placement is necessary, immediate steps must be taken to facilitate timely family reunification or other permanent plans for children. Within the first twenty-four (24) hours of placement, activities include meeting with the family and the children's services worker, the selection of a placement provider, a visit with the

child(ren), and initiation of the child/family assessment. At the seventy-two hour time frame, the initial Family Support Team Meeting occurs. The purpose of this meeting is to develop the family service plan, visitation plan, and identification of family strengths and resources as a team. At a minimum, within thirty (30) days of placement, another Family Support Team Meeting is held to assess progress, barriers, visitation, financial support, and continued case planning. Family Support Team Meetings continue as often as needed, according to the specific needs of the child and family, but at a minimum of every thirty (30) days, or until adjudication. The Family Support Team Meetings may continue at the family's request.

The philosophical base of this practice focuses on development and implementation of service plans from a strengths-based assessment of individual family members and systems. The practice includes decision-making through a Family Support Team process with full inclusion of the birth parent(s). Intensive front-end services are provided to families to address the reasons the child entered care and to support early reunification. Clear decision-making steps relating to permanency planning outcomes are also emphasized when a return home is not feasible.

There are also periodic reviews conducted by the juvenile court. Currently, the Dispositional Order must make a determination that conditions existed which make it unreasonable or not in the best interest of the child to provide services which prevent removal from the home. In 1998, state statute redefined the Dispositional Review hearing as a Permanency Hearing which will be held no later than 12 months after a child enters out-of-home care and, in addition, will determine a permanent plan for the child. Also during 1998, a formal review process began occurring for children who had entered foster care prior to November 19, 1997, and had been in care for 15 of the most recent 22 months. Using the formal review process described in the above paragraph, by December 31, 1999, all children who met these criteria were reviewed. Petitions for termination of parental rights were filed on behalf of those identified children unless the agency documented compelling reasons not to, as defined in federal and state statute. Compelling reasons may include that the child is living with a relative or other reasons documented in the permanency plan, which justify why termination of parental rights is not in the best interest of the child. If continuation of reasonable efforts to reunify is inconsistent with establishing a permanent placement for the child, the Division takes steps necessary to modify the treatment plan. In addition, there are specific situations in which the Division is not required to make reasonable efforts, such as; the parent has committed a severe act of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse toward the child or any child in the family, including acts of incest. When reasonable efforts are not required the court holds a Permanency Hearing within 30 days.

The above efforts toward permanency continue to be made for children who entered out-of-home care after November 19, 1997. If adoption is found to be

the best permanency option for such a child, a termination of parental rights petition must be filed before the child reaches 15 months in care. When scheduling 12-month reviews for these children, all permanency options must be considered with a permanency plan developed and acted upon immediately.

In addition to a child being in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months (which require the juvenile officer or the Division to file a petition for the termination of parental rights) other changes in Missouri law, implemented during 1998, established other conditions for termination. These include: child abandonment, or if the parent has committed murder or voluntary manslaughter of another child of the parent; aided or abetted, attempted or conspired, or solicited to commit murder or manslaughter of a child of the parent; or committed a felony assault that has resulted in serious bodily injury to the child or another child of the parent. State statute also established in 1998 the Division's ability to file petitions for termination of parental rights for children one year of age or over, authorize the juvenile court to terminate the rights of a parent based upon a petition filed by the Division, and prohibit a court or licensed child placing agency from denying or delaying the adoptive placement of a child because the adoptive family lives out of county or out of state.

The numbers of children in the Children's Division legal custody increased during the years 2001 and 2002 but have decreased since that time. There were 11,464 children in legal custody at the end of March 1999; 11,952 children at the end of March 2000; 12,264 children at the end of February 2001; 12,395 children in February 2002; 11,921 children in February 2003, and 11,293 children in legal custody at the end of February 2004.

The average length of stay for children leaving Out-of-Home Care during March 2000, was 18.8 months, a decrease from an average of 19.4 months in 1998; the average length of stay for children leaving Out-of-Home Care during February 2001, was 17.1, a decrease from an average of 18.2 months in 1998; the average length of stay for children leaving care during February 2002 was 17.26 months, an increase from an average of 17.1 months in 2001; and the average length of stay for children leaving in 2003 was 19.6 months, an increase from an average of 17.26 months in 2002. Overall, the average length of placement for all children currently in the legal custody of the Children's Division (CD) is 26.57 months (February 2003), a decrease from the 28.2 months reported for February, 1999.

Of the children active in CD's legal custody on 2-28-99:

- 40.8% have been in placement for over 24 months;
- 21.3% have been in placement from 12 to 23 months; and
- 37.8% have been in placement for less than 11 months.

Of the children active in CD's legal custody on 2-28-00:

- 38.4% had been in placement for over 24 months

- 23% had been in placement from 12 to 23 months; and
- 38.6% had been in placement for less than 11 months.

Of the children active in CD's legal custody on 2-28-01:

- 35.86% had been in placement for over 24 months;
- 23.82% had been in placement from 12 to 23 months; and
- 40.31% had been in placement for less than 11 months.

Of the children active in CD's legal custody on 2-28-02, approximately:

- 35.86% had been in placement for over 24 months;
- 23.82% had been in placement from 12 to 23 months; and
- 40.31% had been in placement for less than 11 months.

Of the children active in CD's legal custody on 2-28-03, approximately:

- 36.47% had been in placement for over 24 months;
- 26.29% had been in placement from 12 to 23 months; and
- 37.25% had been in placement for less than 11 months.

Of the children active in CD's custody on 2-28-04, approximately:

- 38.68% had been in placement for over 23 months;
- 23.01% had been in placement from 12 to 23 months; and
- 38.31% had been in placement for less than 11 months.

The average age of the child in out-of-home Care in 1999 was 9.8 years, in 2000 was 9.9 years, in 2000 through 2004 was 10 years. Other demographic information on children entering and exiting Out-of-Home Care is included in the following informational tables.

RACE/ETHNICITY OF CHILDREN ENTER OUT-OF-HOME CARE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN CY-00-04										
	2000	2000	2001	2001	2002	2002	2003	2003	2004	2004
Race	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
White	5,087	67.7	5,375	70	5,018	69.9	3,852	74	3832	74
Black	2,297	30.6	2,128	27.7	1,964	27.4	1,196	23	1163	22
Amer Ind	20	.3	31	0.4	30	0.4	22	0.4	18	0.3
Asian	42	.6	23	0.3	25	0.3	15	0.2	7	0.1
Multi-race	Unk	Unk.	Unk	Unk	Unk	Unk	16	0.3	24	0.5
Pac.Isl.	Unk.	Unk.	Unk.	Unk	Unk.	Unk	3	0.05	3	00.5
Other	68	.9	124	1.6	142	2.0	99	1.9	103	0.02

AGE OF CHILDREN ENTERING OUT-OF-HOME CARE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN CY-02 FIRST TIME IN CY- 00-04										
	2000	2000	2001	2001	2002	2002	2003	2003	2004	2004
AGE	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
0 – 3	2,102	28.0	2,227	29	2,010	28	1,933	37	1990	39
4 – 6	1,078	14.3	1,031	13.4	1,031	14.4	745	14	737	14
7 - 10	1,427	19.0	1,505	19.6	1,311	18.3	874	17	834	16
11 - 15	2,391	31.8	2,366	30.8	2,078	28.9	1,382	26.6	1014	20
16 +	516	6.9	552	7.2	749	10.4	269	5	278	10

GENDER OF CHILDREN ENTERING OUT-OF-HOME CARE FOR THE FIRST TIME										
	2000	2000	2001	2001	2002	2002	2003	2003	2004	2004
Gender	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Female	3,683	51.4	4,019	52.3	3,612	50.3	2,612	50.2	2611	50.6
Male	3,651	48.6	3,662	47.7	3,567	49.7	2,591	49.8	2539	49.3

Child abuse and neglect is the most prevalent reason for out-of-home placements for children. The most frequent types of CA/N that necessitate placement, by order, are physical abuse; sexual abuse; physical neglect (such as failing to meet the basic nutritional, health, and shelter needs); and lack of supervision. Other major reasons for entering out-of-home care for calendar years 1999 through 2003 are included in table below.

INITIAL PLACEMENT REASON										
	2000	2000	2001	2001	2002	2002	2003	2003	2004	2004
Reason	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
CA/N	4,546	60.5	5,039	65.6	4,709	65.6	4,051	77.9	4,319	83.8
Par. Inc.	289	3.8	369	5	430	6	303	5.8	265	5.1
Vol. Pla.	376	5.0	309	4	285	4	285	4.25	195	3.8
Stat. Off.	189	2.5	6	3	149	2.1	140	2.69	132	2.5
Vol. Rel.	90	1.2	90	1	83	1.2	55	1.06	72	1.3
Par. Ill.	109	1.5	101	1	94	1.3	56	1.08	43	0.8
Adopt.	26	.3	46	.6	28	.4	18	.35	3	0.05
Other	338	4.5	156	2	80	1.1	29	.56	437	8.4

Reason Abbreviations: Child Abuse/Neglect findings, Parent Incarceration, Voluntary Placement, Status Offender, Voluntary Relinquishment, Parent Illness/Death, or Adoption

Out-of-Home Care placement may occur in one of the following placement types:

- *Relative/Kinship Care* - a family licensed to care for children known to them.
- *CD Foster Home* - a child is placed in a licensed foster home or foster group home. This may include relative/kinship arrangements.

- *Residential Care* – a childcare facility licensed by Residential Licensing Unit to provide group or residential treatment.
- *Temporary Adoptive Home* – the court has ordered placement of a child for purpose of adoption, subject to nine-month waiting period.
- *Finalized Adoptive Home* - the court has issued final order of adoption of the child. The child is usually receiving an adoption subsidy payment.
- *Independent Living Arrangement* - an approved plan for an out-of-home care youth over the age of 17, in CD care and custody, to live independently. These children cannot be returned home or be adopted.
- *Transitional Living Program* – an approved plan for a youth age 16 or over whose permanency plan is independence.

Other placement types that are tracked in the Out-of-Home Care Tracking System (ACTS) include:

- *Supervision Only* – CD has been ordered to supervise the child, but legal custody has been awarded to someone other than CD.
- *Detention* - a closed or semi-closed facility in which a pre-adolescent or adolescent, in the care and custody of CD, is placed temporarily until an appropriate placement can be located.
- *Miscellaneous* - these children may be in a medical facility, a special school setting, a mental health facility, or a non-licensed court-ordered placement.

Of the 11,952 children in CD legal custody at the end of March 2000:

- 5,665 were CD foster homes;
- 2,171 were in residential care (including 223 who were in mental health or medical hospitals);
- 2,095 were in placement with certified relative homes;
- 217 were in independent living arrangements;
- 1,586 were in detention, runaway status, group homes or miscellaneous placement types (i.e., special school or court-ordered placement in a non-licensed facility).
- 218 were in adoptive placements with CD still having legal custody.

Of the 12,264 children in CD legal custody at the end of February 2001:

- 6,050 were in CD foster homes;
- 2,281 were in residential care (including 230 who were in mental health or medical hospitals);
- 1,912 were in placement in certified relative homes;
- 339 were in independent living arrangements;
- 1,458 were in detention, runaway status, group homes or miscellaneous placement types

Of the 12,395 children in CD legal custody at the end of February 2002:

- 6,136 were in CD foster homes;

- 2,363 were in residential care (including 235 who were in mental health or medical hospitals;
- 1,771 were in placement in licensed relative/kinship homes;
- 413 were in independent living and transitional living arrangements.
- 208 were in detention, runaway status, group homes or miscellaneous placement types.
- 1,344 were in court ordered placements.
- 160 were in adoptive placements with CD still having legal custody.

Of the 11,921 children in CD legal custody at the end of February 2003:

- 5,825 were in CD foster homes;
- 2,172 were in residential care (including 224 who were in mental health or medical hospitals);
- 1,954 were in placement in licensed relative/kinship homes;
- 478 were in independent living and transitional living arrangements;
- 191 were in detention, runaway status, group homes or miscellaneous placement types (e.g., special school or court-ordered placement in a non-licensed facility).
- 1,172 were in court ordered placements.
- 129 were in adoptive placements with CD still having legal custody.

Of the 11,293 children in CD legal custody at the end of February 2004:

- 5,523 were in CD foster homes.
- 2,158 were in residential care (including 22 who were in mental health or medical hospitals).
- 1,684 were in placement in licensed relative/kinship homes.
- 443 were in independent living and transitional living arrangements.
- 191 were in detention, runaway status, group homes or miscellaneous placement types.
- 1,127 were in court ordered placements.
- 135 were in adoptive placements with CD still having legal custody.

Finalized adoptions increased except in two years from 1999 through 2004:

- SFY-99 – 1018 finalized adoptions
- SFY-00 -- 1246 finalized adoptions
- SFY-01 – 1261 finalized adoptions
- SFY-02 – 1519 finalized adoptions
- SFY-03 – 1427 finalized adoptions
- SFY 04 – 1356 finalized adoptions